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newsletter

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D E L I U S

S O C I E T Y

N E W S L E T T E R

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EDITOR : CHRISTOPHER W. REDWOOD

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EDITORIAL

The article which has just dropped through your letter box is not an advertiser's gimmick, but the Delius Society's Newsletter in, so to speak, sheep's clothing. It has been felt for sometime that a journal of increasing circulation should aspire to a more professional appearance; John White has decided to take a well-earned rest from editing it, and I have been given the task of developing the new format.

I cannot begin better than by paying tribute to my predecessor. John has been editing the Newsletter for 7 years, and has always managed to keep the membership satisfied with a regular flow of interesting material. I know that it has often not been easy: living as far from London as he does, he has not had access to the best printing facilities, neither has he always been able to make easy contacts for the material he wanted. Nevertheless, he has already made one substantial improvement in format in the past few years, and I hope that the present change will be seen to continue the trend he has set.

Another person to whom one cannot pay too strong a tribute is our former Hon. Secretary, Estelle Palmley. That the Committee were for so long unable to find anyone to take over her post is in itself an indictment of how irreplaceable she was. She kept up a voluminous correspondence, particularly with overseas members, and regularly produced her own "Secretary's Notes", in which she dealt as much with the social as the musical side of the Society. I feel sure that I shall not insulting any future Hon. Secretary when I say that the likelihood of this being repeated is remote, and it is therefore my object that future issues of the Newsletter shall attempt, in some humble way, to emulate Estelle's inimitable Notes under a general Editorial heading. I am already indebted to Estelle herself for several such items of information contained in this issue. I should be pleased to receive information from members concerning any Delius performance they may have attended or heard on the radio, or forthcoming concerts. Critiques are also welcome. I should state here that my time is somewhat limited, so please do not be discouraged if replies to letters are sometimes brief and tardy!

It has also been suggested that this journal should have a title, rather than just being called "The Delius Society Newsletter". I should welcome suggestions from members. Something pithy and relevant is required, although I should warn potential wags that no such perpetration as "Grexit Matter" will be entertained!

Mention of correspondence leads me to say that letters from members will be welcome. I believe there is every reason for a society publication including a

correspondence column in which members may air their views. Naturally, I cannot guarantee to publish every letter I receive; nor will those printed necessarily reflect the views of either the Editor or the Committee. Whilst making these disclaimers, I had better add that, unlike my predecessor, I shall not be a member of the Committee, and so any views I may express in Editorial columns are not necessarily theirs.

I should be particularly pleased to hear members' suggestions regarding the content of the Newsletter. Do most readers, for instance, welcome reprints of press comments on Delius performances, or do they feel that such repetition is in danger of being overdone? It may be recalled that at the 1972 Annual General Meeting a suggestion was made that newer members would welcome the opportunity to read articles published in early Newsletters, or accounts of talks given in the early days of the Society. Précis of lectures are, of course, one of the declared objects of the Newsletter, and I do not intend to overlook this point. Like Estelle Palmley, I am very much aware of the disadvantages suffered by members who live at some distance from London, compared with their metropolitan counterparts.

Readers of "The Guardian" may have noticed an article by Sir Neville Cardus on June 6th in which he discussed the value of contemporary musical criticism. "...who, nowadays in musical criticism," he wrote, "can be said to possess a keener musical intelligence and knowledge, than Newman's and Shaw's? And if they wrote nonsense about Bantock and Goetz, what are the odds that greater nonsense is being written in 1973 of the 'contemporary' fashionables? Let us imagine a sort of musical Stock Exchange. Which of today's composers would be regarded as good 'futures'? Frankly, I'd invest in Elgar with rather more confidence, a long term in view, than in Britten, even. And I'm not sure that Delius wouldn't be 'safer', and return better dividends, than even Walton ten years hence....." (Reprinted by kind permission of "The Guardian")

On June 18th, the castaway on the BBC Radio 4 programme "Desert Island Discs" was Basil Dean, director of the original production of "Hassan". Amongst his eight records he chose the Serenade from Delius's score, and "The Walk to the Paradise Garden", the former being his choice if only allowed one record.

There was a Delian atmosphere about the television programme "Face the Music" on Monday June 18th. The guest musician was Norman del Mar, looking exceptionally fit, as well he may, since he is to be the conductor on the Last Night of the Proms this year!

Norman del Mar was of course able to identify almost immediately, sometimes from as little as one note, the extracts from Beethoven works etc. played to him, and in answer to the last question: "what two composers are involved here?", said at once "Peter Warlock and Frederick Delius", since the music was that composed by Warlock for Delius's sixtieth birthday.

Arising out of a discussion on Strauss (Norman del Mar having recently completed his third volume on that composer), Mr del Mar referred to the Delius film "as a masterpiece of television", in which Joseph Cooper, the question-master, concurred.

Before Norman del Mar joined the programme, Miss Palmley thought she spotted an error, when an extract from "On hearing the first cuckoo in spring" was referred to as from "Brigg Fair". I wonder if any other members watching the programme can confirm this?

June 10th 1973 : At Estelle Palmley's request to the BBC, the Delius Piano Concerto (the Jean Rodolphe Kars recording) was played. Denis Matthews, who had performed the work at the Royal Festival Hall on January 29th, 1962, was in charge of the programme. On the same afternoon, Estelle Palmley, Ray Martin and other members of the Society visited Limsfield.

June 30th, 1973 : Brenda Bruce, the celebrated actress, was the castaway on the BBC Radio 4 programme "Desert Island Discs", and not only chose the "Florida Suite" as one of her records but also named it as her preferred disc of the eight allowed. In the following programme "These you have loved", Richard Baker played "A Song before Sunrise", using the Barbirolli recording.

July 1st, 1973 : A concert which was to have been given at the Queen Elizabeth Hall with the Bruckner-Mahler Choir of London singing four Delius unaccompanied songs, among other items, was cancelled on the day, owing the illness of the conductor, Wyn Morris.

July 18th, 1973 : The compilers of the BBC -TV programme "Face the Music" seem to be fond of Delius, for this edition again contained a Delian excerpt, this time from "Summer Night on the River".

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Finally, I would like to express my grateful thanks to Malcolm Walker who has typed out all the copy for this issue of the Newsletter. THE EDITOR.

DELIUS ON RECORD — THE PIANO CONCERTO

By LYNDON JENKINS

The news that we may have a brand new recording of the Piano Concerto (from EMI with John Ogdon as soloist) has prompted me to listen afresh to earlier performances, in particular those dating from the 78 rpm era.

Most people have hard things to say about the Piano Concerto and I suppose I would agree that it is a work to be loved rather admired. Of these Delius writers Beecham is kindest; even so his remark "The Public likes to listen to it" would have more relevance in the present day if the Concerto ever turned up in concert programmes. Certainly it is not easy to remember when it was last given in London - or elsewhere. The survival in the record catalogue until now of the 1970 recording by Jean-Rodolphe Kars suggests that sales have been adequate and perhaps the Ogdon disc, when it comes, will awaken a fresh interest especially if accompanied by a public performance or two. In my view it should prove more than a match for the Decca/Kars account, over which it is difficult to feel other than that the pianist is not really at home in the idiom nor is able to do much to disguise the work's structural deficiencies. This, coupled with a routine accompaniment (the London Symphony Orchestra at its most perfunctory), makes for disappointing listening.

One pianist who was able to bring some shape and cohesion to the work was Benno Moiseiwitsch, judged on the evidence of his August 1946 records with the Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by Constant Lambert. In comparison with the later 78 rpm set by the second Lady Beecham (with her husband conducting the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra), Moiseiwitsch to my mind emerges the clear victor on nearly every count despite Sir Thomas's persuasive hand in the proceedings. Discussed together the differences in these two performances are quite remarkable.

One thing which can be said in favour of the Piano Concerto is that it has an arresting beginning; that first theme, destined to bind the whole work together, though no doubt derivative, is at once attractive in its rather grave way and it begins an impressive opening paragraph which ends only at fig. 3 (Delius Trust score; Boosey and Hawkes). Moiseiwitsch sees this and brings it off splendidly at one tempo from start to finish. Lady Beecham begins well enough but within four bars makes an unnecessary rallentando; then, when she reaches the first solo display passage (four bars after fig. 2) she reduces the speed immediately, far more than the *meno mosso* her husband's edited score suggests (and which I suspect may not be in the original); the result is that the impulse is

lost, the brass sounds uncertain with its chords, at least one pizzicato chord goes awry and, all-in-all the listener reaches fig. 3 with something of a sense of relief.

Now comes (fig. 4) the second theme: Moiseiwitsch plays it simply and unaffectedly with sensitive rubato which does not disturb the line, essential if the orchestral interjections are to sound natural and not awkward. Lady Beecham attempts to invest this simple melody with a grandeur it will not bear, and plays the triplet accompaniment in a distractingly unrhythmic manner. Needless to say Sir Thomas handles the orchestra most artfully, carefully 'papering over the joins', as it were, and securing such lovely playing that one hardly notices how one's attention is being drawn from the piano.

At fig. 6 (following a curious occurrence, Lambert observing the instruction to mute the horns, Beecham ignoring it) comes a series of brass fanfares based on the opening bars, with soft piano interjections. Moiseiwitsch and Lambert play these bars in strict time and they take their place in the overall scheme; Lady Beecham plays her bars in any old time and Sir Thomas has a job to synchronise his brass; once again an awkward effect is created. From here to the end of the first section with its series of climaxes there is little to be said except that Moiseiwitsch with his greater sense of structure and superior technique makes these pages sound just about as acceptable as one can hope for. This is where the virtuoso approach pays off; the Beechams' account, though conceived on a similar scale, lacks flow and the necessary brilliance and thus hangs together less well.

It should be stated that in both these performances the recorded sound of the piano is on the tubby side; this factor, at the opening of the slow section, probably emphasises the lumpy effect of Lady Beecham's playing though it is undeniably both too loud and too heavily accented while Moiseiwitsch's simple, softer statement is what is required. He is as good, too, at the recapitulation, after a carefully related middle section with a not overdone climax which compares very favourably to my mind with the Beechams' huge overblown affair. Here and there the Philharmonia players prove superior to their opposite numbers, e.g. the chromatic woodwind and string bars after fig. 20; and interesting that both conductors elect to use a solo cello at the end, though it is not specified in the score (presumably it is in the original?).

Moiseiwitsch now manages the transition to the third section splendidly with a natural little cadenza, so different to Lady Beecham whose arpeggio chords seem endless and who again tries to put more into this thin music than it will stand. From here on perhaps I may summarise as follows:

Moiseiwitsch: ignores the marking "Broad" at fig. 23 with good effect; his playing of the melodic theme after fig. 24 has all the virtues of his earlier playing of it: he and Lambert introduce an odd little pause just before the two solo timpani bars: all their tempi are well thought out, and they do not hesitate to adopt a proper "Maestoso" at three bars before fig. 27: on the very last chord of all they are not together.

Beechams': the conductor controls this last section better though it all sounds a bit heavy-going and there is a difference of opinion over tempo before fig. 24 after which Lady Beecham's playing has all the negative virtues noted earlier: finally, in the Adagio piano solo before the closing bars, the appoggio chords have no melodic meaning whatever.

Listeners who can be bothered with 78s and can pick up a set will, I think, find the Moiseiwitsch discs very rewarding despite the sub-standard sound (which must make them an unlikely candidate for LP transfer, especially at this late stage). The convenient side-changes do, however, mean that the performance can be put together very successfully on a tape where judicious knob-twiddling will probably enable a very tolerable overall sound to be achieved.

The Beechams' version, on the other hand, has little to recommend it: indeed, when considered against the conductor's long line of uniformly excellent performances of 78 rpm discs, it is a little difficult to understand how it came to be issued in the first place. It is, however, easier to see that, once issued, it had special claims to be coupled with the Violin Concerto in the two LP discs of 78 rpm transfers issued in 1962 to celebrate the Centenary.

Recordings discussed

Benno Moiseiwitsch, Philharmonia Orchestra /Constant Lambert HMV C3533-5
(matrix nos: 2EA1185-2; 11186-2; 11187-2; 11188-1; 11189-2)
recorded August 1946

Lady Betty Humby-Beecham, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Sir Thomas Beecham
(matrix nos: 2EA11318-3; 11319-3; 11320-5; 11321-4; 11322-3) HMV DB6428-30
(matrix no: 2 XEA2115) LP transfer: HMV ALP1890
recorded December 4th and 6th, 1946

Jean-Rodolphe Kars, London Symphony Orchestra/Alexander Gibson Decca SXL6435
(matrix no: ZAL9485 ; recorded May 19th, 1969)

"A MASS OF LIFE" AT GUILDFORD ON MAY 5TH, 1973

Performance given in the Civic Hall, Guildford by Jane Manning (soprano), Margaret Cable (contralto), Kenneth Woollam (tenor), Thomas Allen (baritone) with the Guildford Philharmonic Choir and Orchestra (leader : Hugh Bean) conducted by Vernon Handley.

As I stepped off the train at London Road Station, Guildford, the first thing that caught my eye was a poster advertising a performance of Elgar's "Dream of Gerontius" at Guildford Cathedral on the same evening. Cynically, I remarked to my wife "No doubt all the Christians will go to the Cathedral tonight, and all the heathens to the Civic Hall: " Seriously, though, people who permit such clashes to occur really deserve a good kick in the pants. It reminds me of my own limited experience of provincial music-making, where the handful of musicians in the town all arranged their choir practices and orchestra rehearsals on the same night so that no one would out-strip the others.

I cannot speak for the size of the audience in the Cathedral, but on the evidence of the Civic Hall there were plenty of heathens in Guildford that night, as well as a large contingent from the Delius Society, and they were not disappointed in their bill-of-fair. The opening chorus was a little on the slow side, the choir reaching their top notes, but not that feeling of elation that the music should convey, and the string playing a trifle tentative. I missed that slightly-detached crispness of the opening chords that made recent performances at the Festival Hall under Groves and at the BBC studios under del Mar so memorable. I should add that the work was sung in English, and to my mind something is always lost in such circumstances, so this may have been a contributory factor. The second movement, "Now lift up your hearts", brought to the fore one of the up-and-coming young English baritones, Thomas Allen. Mr Allen has a pleasant voice and accomplished his role well, save for one mishap in the final section. However, his tone is not really large enough for a work like this, especially when hampered by an unsympathetic acoustic. In addition, he has an unfortunate habit of holding his music rather low and singing downwards, rather than up to the balcony. Promise, rather than achievement, was the word for this performance, and Mr Allen's Zarathustra is certainly something to be looked forward to in ten year's time.

I have mentioned the acoustic of the Civic Hall. Although I have visited it several times, I have never before been so struck by the difficulty experienced by all four soloists at times in riding the wave of orchestral sound. Although I discovered afterwards that two of them were not fully fit, there must nevertheless be some peculiarity of acoustic which tends to muffle a soloist at the front of the platform while not affect-

ing the choir at the back. Some other members of the Delius Society may recall a performance of "Sea Drift" given here some three or four years ago, in which much of Whitman was lost, and some uncharitable things were said about the soloist. If I were to be so bold as to give Mr Handley advice for his future productions it would be to pick his soloists primarily for their experience and the size of voice to mount the orchestra in that hall. His present policy, which seems to be one of giving opportunities to younger singers, while admirable in itself, is not entirely fair to them or to their audiences. However good the orchestra may be - and on this occasion it was very good - they must rate a class below that of their London counterparts, and in orchestras of the second rank one of the most difficult effects to obtain is a real pianissimo. Brass in particular always seem too heavy, and this can impose a severe strain on a young voice, especially when singing with (or against) the forces which Delius employed.

The third section, beginning "In thine eyes I gazed of late, O wondrous life", was marred by the poor voice of the tenor soloist, who had developed a cold during the day. Mr Woollam did his best to cope in the ensembles but subsequently had to hand over his solo in the fourth section of Part II to the soprano. The latter role was sung by Jane Manning, herself recovering from bronchitis, and who was standing in at short notice for the indisposed Ilse Wolf. The quartet was completed by Margaret Cable (contralto) who seemed to know better than the others how to get through the orchestra. Her "O Zarathustra" in the first part, always one of the high spots of the work for me, was beautifully managed.

If the chorus had left something to be desired at the opening, they made up for it in the quieter passages that followed. I was struck by the warmth of tone and the clarity with which they projected their words when singing seated. Indeed, I have never heard "Night reigneth" brought off so effectively.

The orchestra has already been briefly referred to. Perhaps for the benefit of overseas members I should explain that the Guildford Philharmonic is a body consisting of very talented amateurs and a large body of professionals, who give concerts about once a month in the winter season, supported by the local council and the Arts Council of Great Britain. It contains a number of players from the big London orchestras, but not the same ones every time, for obvious reasons. On this occasion they included artists of the calibre of Hugh Bean (leader), Terence McDonagh (oboe) and Leonard Brain (bass oboe). The trio for oboe, cor anglais and bass oboe in the second part, so evocative of the introduction to the third picture of "A Village Romeo and Juliet", was especially beautiful. The introduction "On the mountains" also went well -

the horns used to be a rocky section in this orchestra. Overall, considerable credit must go to Vernon Handley who directed his forces with skill and enthusiasm, so that not even his bad luck with the health of his soloists was allowed to detract from the performance. The thanks of all Delians must go to him for yet another opportunity to hear the work live. Indeed, no-one who can listen to a fine performance of this work from a good seat for less than £1.00 has any right at all to carp.

CHRISTOPHER W. REDWOOD.

VISIT TO AMERICA OF MR ERIC FENBY

Members will be pleased to learn that our President, Mr Eric Fenby, has accepted an invitation to be the guest of the Saint Louis Symphony Society at four performances of "A Mass of Life" in St Louis on January 17th and 19th, 1974; in New York on January 21st; and in Washington on January 25th. The soloists engaged for the performances are:

Lorna Haywood (soprano)
 Helen Watts (contralto)
 Jeral Becker (tenor)
 Benjamin Luxon (baritone)

St Louis Symphony Orchestra and University of Missouri Chorus
 conducted by Walter Susskind.

While in St Louis and New York, Mr Fenby will be giving lectures relating to his association with Delius. This is a similar arrangement to that under which Ursula Vaughan Williams went to the United States two years ago when the "Sea Symphony" was broadcast.

A further transatlantic honour for Mr Fenby comes in the shape of an invitation to become the first Honorary Chairman of the newly-constituted Frederick Delius Society, whose headquarters is in Houston, Texas. The Executive Director, George Englesmith, CM, FRSA, is in the process of drafting suitable bye-laws to obtain the State and Federal Tax exemption essential for fund-raising in order to promote performances. Mr Fenby has accepted this invitation, and we all look forward to hearing more of the new Society's activities.

YORK FESTIVAL - SATURDAY JUNE 16TH, 1973

The inaugural concert of the Festival was given by the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Sir Charles Groves (the Society's new Vice-President) with the Liverpool Philharmonic Choir with Thomas Hemsley (baritone). The programme was:

Fanfare for a Festival	Havergal Brian
Song of the High Hills	Delius
Sea Drift	Delius
Symphony No. 2	Elgar

As was to be expected, the programme drew a number of Delius Society members from various parts of the country.

Eleven London members travelled up on the Friday and stayed at the Compton Court Hotel at Caywood. Although the accomodation was satisfactory, several members were kept awake by what sounded like machine guns. Some alarm was caused by a false report that the party had been misdirected to Belfast, but on enquiry, it transpired that it was not the IRA but the traffic clattering across a nearby wooden bridge.

A few of the faithful attended the rehearsal of "Sea Drift" on the Saturday afternoon. Thomas Hemsley sang throughout without a score and it was apparent that he knew the work intimately - at one point he drew the conductor's attention to an error in the wood-wind section. The choir were tending to flatten during the section "Oh! rising stars" and difficulties were experienced with the acoustics. Sir Charles Groves had a minor altercation with a lady who was directing what appeared to be a searchlight straight into his eyes; eventually she re-directed it at a cellist - fortunately his comments were not audible in these hallowed surroundings.

At 6. 30 pm drinks, sandwiches and cakes were served to members at Terry's Restaurant. It is, no doubt, invidious to mention some of the people present but apart from the 'hard-core' (Messrs Walker, Redwood, Parfitt, Carley, Threlfall and Estelle Palmley), our President and Mrs Fenby were there, also Mr Felix Aprahamian, Mr John Canarina of Florida, Mr and Mrs Ray Osborne, Mr Ray Martin, Mr C. Jennings from Goole, Mr N. Staveley from Hull, Dr and Mrs Roger Buckley, Mr and Mrs Lyndon Jenkins, Miss Wyn Evans and Mr Dick Kitching. Apologies are tendered to anyone whose name has been omitted. This very pleasant gathering had been organised by our Vice-Chairman, Charles Barnard with his customary efficiency, and was greatly appreciated by those of who do care for culture on a empty stomach.

Following the eats and drinks (Midlands Branch style) we adjourned for the concert. The Minster is in the course of major restoration and renovation, and at the entrance are enormous iron buttresses. Inside, however, the wonderful fabric has been cleaned revealing lovely honey-coloured stone. It was an unusual setting for Delius, but not incongruous for the two works being performed.

Prior to the performance Lyndon Jenkins and I were admiring a model of the City of York when we were accosted by Sir Charles Groves who asked "Are you Delius people?" We have decided that we must have a cloven foot branded on our brows.

I am not qualified to comment upon the performances except to say that the Havergal Brian could not be heard to advantage owing to the excessive resonance. Textures were obscured in the Delius but not so badly, and the Elgar fared best in this respect.

As a postscript, it should be mentioned that two members of the writer's party (who shall remain anonymous) had resolved to enjoy the pleasures of the table in preference to the cerebral pleasures of the concert. They were justly rewarded for such sacrilege by finding that all the restaurants in York were fully booked, and were eventually found sitting disconsolately in the car sucking Polo mints.

R. B. KITCHING.

"A SONG OF SUMMER" AT NFT

The National Film Theatre, South Bank, London SE1, is holding a major retrospective season of Ken Russell's films in October and November. "A Song of Summer" will be shown three times in a double-bill with Russell's Elgar film, on Monday October 22nd 1973 at 6.30 pm and 8.45 pm, and again on Wednesday November 14th 1973 at 8.30 pm. Performances at the NFT are open to members only, temporary membership costing 50p for one month. Ticket prices for these performances are 30p, 40p and 50p. If, however, enough members are interested, a block booking could be made, and the Newsletter Editor is willing to organise this for the performance on November 14th, provided members contact him as soon as possible after publication of this Newsletter. His telephone number is 01-946 5952.

MIDLAND BRANCH REPORT

At the meeting on December 8th, 1972 the Branch received a distinguished visitor in the person of Denham V. Ford, Chairman of the Sir Thomas Beecham Society. Denham Ford is in the somewhat rare situation of having been Sir Thomas's Secretary for a number of years following the last war and he brings to his recollections of the great conductor a unique personal authority.

Needless to say Delius figured prominently in the programme as Mr Ford spoke about events surrounding the 1946 Festival, reminding us that the baritone soloist in the "Mass of Life" performance was none other than Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, making his début in this country and singing the part from memory. Musical illustrations included the First Dance Rhapsody and that rare disc of Elsie Suddaby singing "Twilight Fancies" to an orchestral accompaniment obviously by Sir Thomas.

There were also a number of Beecham stories when Mr Ford recalled visits he paid with Sir Thomas to Nottingham and other Midlands cities. Especially evocative was the picture of the impromptu rehearsal on the afternoon of a Leicester concert which had to take place in a summer-house (the concert hall being in use) and was a "a deadly serious affair" despite there being a mere dozen RPO players present - all Mr Ford had been able to round up in the time available.

LYNDON JENKINS.

We held a "Salute to Percy Grainger" at Shirley Clover's home in Leicester on May 18th, 1973. At the time the programme was mooted we were not aware that Mrs Grainger was to be a guest at the Society's dinner on the following evening.

Following the precedent set at last year's Warlock evening the musical performances were interspersed with readings about Grainger culled in the main from the article by Peter Pears in the British Institute of Recorded Sound's publications "Recorded Sound" for January - April 1972 and from Eric Fenby's book "Delius as I knew him".

The works performed were:

Country Gardens (piano duet) - E. E. Rowe and R. B. Kitching
 Children's March (piano solo) - Shirley Clover
 Shepherd's Hey (piano solo) - P. V. Trotman

Songs by Margaret Trotman (soprano):

Pretty Maid Milking her Cow
Died for Love
Sprig of Thyme

Bassoon solos by Brian Dunn:

Irish tune from County Derry
The Sussex Mummers Christmas Carol

Piano solo by R. B. Kitching:

Handel in the Strand

Songs by Clive Bemrose (baritone):

Six Dukes went a' fishing
Autumn
Men of the Sea
The British Waterside

Piano solos by E. E. Rowe:

Walking Tune
Hill Song - extract
Spoon River
One more day my John

The final item was a recording of Grainger's lovely setting of "Brigg Fair" for chorus performed by the Elizabethan Singers under Louis Halsey.

We then adjourned to a candlelit supper room for a splendid buffet.

R. B. KITCHING.

On September 21st, Mr J. B. Priestley was given the Freedom of the City of Bradford, and our President, Mr Eric Fenby, was invited to give a lecture-recital at the occasion, entitled "Delius the Musician". We hope to publish a report on the proceedings in a future issue of the Newsletter.

NEWS FROM AMERICA

I was most interested to receive a letter from one of our American members, Mr Arthur L. Lange, who had attended the production of "A Village Romeo and Juliet". He wrote: "Having had the opportunity to attend both the Washington and St Paul productions of 'A Village Romeo', I thought that I should write down my impressions. I am neither a musician nor a critic; however, I was so disappointed with the latter production that I feel that some criticism is warranted. Along with my remarks I submit a review from the St Paul paper. The critic obviously had not seen the Washington staging. It would have been preferable for St Paul to have staged the work conventionally, rather than to have served up such a shoddy imitation".

Since this is the first adverse comment I have received on the American production, I am sure Mr Lange's remarks will be of interest to members. Speaking for myself, I was fascinated at the idea of the Dark Fiddler identifying himself with the Priest at the Wedding -- not wholly inappropriate I would have thought. I wonder whether other readers share my view? ----- EDITOR.

* * * * *

"A VILLAGE ROMEO AND JULIET" AT SAINT PAUL

My wife and I attended the St Paul (Minnesota) production of the opera on June 29th, 1973, expecting that it would be similar to the 1972 production of the Washington Opera Society, which I had had the good fortune to attend. Though I found the singing, with one exception, better than that of Washington, I was very disappointed in almost all other aspects of the St Paul version, particularly the visual effects. The fact that my wife, who had not seen the Washington production, was impressed and that the reviewer that I read received it favourably testifies to the abilities of the performers and the score, which carried the event despite the poor scenery.

Although the props and costumes were borrowed from Washington, they apparently did not obtain the motion picture films that so dramatically enhanced the 1972 event. Instead, home-made slides were projected as multiple images on the scrims. Aside from the unattractiveness of most of the slides, the projections were very much washed out by the lights in the orchestra which were not covered over as in Washington. For most of the vocal portions, the scrims were raised, bathing the performers in full illumination, but very much detracting from the dreamy quality of the work. The occasional slides of the lovers' faces blown up to fill the screen did not add to the subtlety of the drama.

Robert Johnson and Diana Catani-Soviero, though looking somewhat old for the parts of Sali and Vreli, projected their voices much better than did John Stewart and Patricia Wells in Washington. (Perhaps the raising of the scrim had something to do with this.) But I felt that Alan Titus was wrongly cast as the Dark Fiddler. His voice was weak in comparison and his mein is anything but sinister ---- he too much resembles the boy next door. Furthermore, the director, Lois Bewley, had him wandering around the stage at every opportunity (even during the Walk), and appearing as the priest at the Wedding. In Washington, the youthful voices of young Sali and Vreli were a delightful prelude to the drama, but in St Paul their voices came from the adult principals off-stage, so far removed from the youngsters that the association of voices with the young performers surely eluded some of the audience at first.

Throughout the piece, I thought that the directing was poor. The actors moved around unconvincingly and the chorus seemed hardly to know what to do with themselves. The Walk to the Paradise Garden was transformed into a corny ballet episode, with Sali and Vreli proceeding several times across the stage with a dance in the middle each time ---- to drag out the action, and I suppose keep the audience entertained. How better it would have been (lacking the Washington films) to drop the curtain and let the music carry the interlude. One of the few blemishes of the Washington version was repeated; namely, the incongruous and rather ludicrous injection of the man-in-the-white-coat to carry away Vreli's father to the asylum. At St Paul, as in the recording libretto, the unmellifluous "Vrenchen" was predominately substituted for "Vreli", a practise that deserves to be abolished from all future performances.

Igor Buketoff conducted the orchestra with considerable understanding of Delius's intent, except in the loud and fast passages, particularly the Wedding Scene and Fair. The orchestra and chorus there sounded so confused that it must have been difficult for one unfamiliar with the music to make much sense of it.

"A Village Romeo" is scheduled for the New York City Opera this Fall and other cities thereafter. I do hope that the mistakes of this production will not be repeated; for my part, I would be content if the original Washington version is restaged, minus, of course, the man-in-the-white-suit.

ARTHUR L. LANGE.

"A VILLAGE ROMEO AND JULIET"

FRAGILE DELIUS WORK SMOOTHLY PERFORMED BY ST PAUL OPERA

By MARY ANN FELDMAN

Like an orchestral tone poem whose tale is brought to life by singers and designers, Frederick Delius's "A Village Romeo and Juliet" smoothly unfolded at O'Shaughnessy Auditorium Wednesday night. In both musical and visual aspects, the third production of the St Paul Opera's current summer season attested to the maturity, polish and discipline with which the company can mount a fragile work whose success depends upon refinement of detail rather than robust singing.

Those who come to the opera house for spectacle, vocal sparks or melodramatic steam may be disappointed by the poignant tragedy, whose bare bones of plot are familiar from Shakespeare. Spanning six poetic episodes, the story is spun primarily in the rhetoric of a big orchestra. The reticence of the drama is tempered by ripeness of instrumental sound.

Little wonder that this underdog opera was championed by the late Sir Thomas Beecham, for its star is the conductor --- in this case SPO music director Igor Buketoff. He led a cohesive, flowing performance that was immaculate in its attention to detail.

Buketoff's players delivered mostly stellar work. Notable were woodwind principals, including Adele Zeitlin, flute, Rachel Brudnoy, oboe, and Joseph Longo, clarinet.

Director Lois Bewley virtually choreographed the actors and chorus, who moved in slow motion dance, treading the fine line between grace and artifice without becoming mannered. She evoked the lyric simplicity of a fairy tale. Fluid movement, sensuous but restrained, not only belied the static nature of the plot but matched the rhythms of the music.

The mood she captured was visually reinforced by images of leafy, unclipped nature almost as impressionistic as Delius' score. Scenery designer Kristine Haugen created an amorphous, three-dimensional environment by means of multiple projectors that sketched the romantic Swiss landscape on backdrop and scrim.

The uncluttered stage was bathed in golden half-light conceived by Jane Reisman. All elements of this stage piece --- music, design and action --- were woven into

a theatrical tapestry of silken sheen. The unity of goal was extraordinary.

If the singers are left to last, it is because they are by no means the dominating aspect of an opera whose narrative emanates from the orchestra pit. As the gracefully bare-footed lovers, too innocent and unreal to exist in an evil world, soprano Diana Catani-Soviero and tenor Robert Johnson sang in perfect blend and balance.

But the most impressive voice of the evening was the gleaming baritone of young Alan Titus, whose sound is not big but whose projection is exceptional. As the mysterious Dark Fiddler, symbol of destiny and rightful heir to the wild land over which the fathers have quarreled themselves into beggary, Titus created an attractive figure whose lure the lovers reject, choosing a double suicide in drowning instead of vagabondage. (They are, in fact, an English Tristan and Isolde.) Like Titus, all the principals sustained the long, expressive lines of Delius' difficult score. The splendid choral work of the wedding dream and fair brought contrast of color and spirit.

The pastel-toned costumes and fanciful properties were on loan from the Opera Society of Washington in a sensible exchanges of resources. Since this is not an opera about flesh-and-blood people, the suggestion of watercolor images was appropriate to the drama.

Mary Ann Feldman is program annotator for the Minnesota Orchestra.

(Reprinted from the St Paul Dispatch : June 28th, 1973)

Members are advised of a slip in the Secretary's Notes dated August/September 1973. The recording of the concert which includes Delius's "Lebenstanz" at the BBC Maida Vale Studios on Saturday November 17th 1973 is from 2.30 pm to 5.30 pm and not from 6.30 to 9.30 pm as stated.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Below is appended a brief resumé of articles published in recent years by members of the Society, together with details of where the various publications may be obtained.

L. CARLEY

"Jelka Rosen Delius : Artist, admirer and friend of Rodin. The correspondence 1900 - 1914".
Nottingham French Studies, May 1970 (Vol IX No. 1), pp. 16-30. October 1970 (Vol IX No. 2), pp. 81-102.
(Available from: Dept. of French, The University, Nottingham.)

Delius : Bibliography.

In "Delius" by Alan Jefferson (Dent, London 1972; Octagon Books, New York 1972) pp. 151-7

Exhibition catalogue : "Delius and America" (in collaboration with Robert Threlfall).
Delius Society/Camden Festival, London 1972.
(Copies still available at 25p each from the Newsletter Editor.)

"Hans Haym : Delius's Prophet and Pioneer".
Music and Letters : Vol. 54 No. 1 - January 1973 pp.1-24
(Available from Oxford University Press, 44 Conduit Street, London W1.)

to be published shortly

"Delius and Grainger" - in "Grainger Symposium" edited by Arthur Ridgewell.
(Simon Publications , 1974)

"Delius in Paris"
(Triad Press, 1974 : details will be available later).

in preparation

"Delius : A Pictorial Biography" (in collaboration with Robert Threlfall).

A. JEFFERSON

"Delius" (Dent, London 1972; Octagon Books, New York 1972).

R. THRELFALL

Delius in Eric Fenby's MSS — Composer 31, Spring 1969, pp. 19-21
(Available from The Composers' Guild of Great Britain, 10 Stratford Place, London W1).

Delius's Second Thoughts, and an Unknown Version of his Piano Concerto — Musical Opinion, August 1970, pp. 579 and 581
(Available from 87 Wellington Street, Luton, Bedfordshire).

Delius's Piano Concerto - a Postscript — Musical Opinion, October 1971, pp. 14-15.

Delius : Catalogue of Works -- in Jefferson : "Delius", pp. 136-142.

Preface to "Ten Songs by Frederick Delius" — Stainer and Bell, 1973.

Delius Music Manuscripts in Australia — in the press; to appear in Studies in Music, Vol. 7, Perth, Western Australia, 1973.
(Available from The University of Perth, W. Australia).

RACHEL LOWE

The Delius Trust Manuscripts — Brio, Spring 1968, Vol 5 No. 1, pp. 5-9
(Available from the Royal Academy of Music Library, Marylebone Road, London NW1).

Delius's First Performance — Musical Times, March 1965, pp. 190-2.
(Available from Novello and Co. Ltd., 27 Soho Square, London W1).

Delius and Norway — Studies in Music, Vol 6, Perth, WA., 1972

A Summary of the Catalogue of the Music Manuscripts... of the Delius Trust — accepted for publication in The Music Review; no date of issue yet available.
(Available from W. Heffer and Sons Ltd., 3-4 Petty Cury, Cambridge).

CORRESPONDENCE

MISSING SCORE

Dear Sir,

During the course of a recent visit I made to Grez, Madame Merle d' Aubigné, owner of the former Delius house, told me that not so long ago she had lent her copy of the printed piano score of Delius's early one-act opera, "Margot la Rouge" to a visitor to her home.

She cannot recall who this was, but there is a good chance of course that it may have been a member of the Delius Society. She would be grateful for the return of this rare publication, which is in hard covers, and hopes that a note in the Newsletter may help to bring this about.

Many of us have cause to be grateful to Madame Merle d' Aubigné who has always permitted visiting Delians - in ever-increasing numbers - to look round her beautiful garden and even, when possible, to see something of her house itself. The least one hopes, in the face of this continuing kindness, is that the missing score will turn up.

25a Arlington Way, London EC1 Dr. Lionel Carley.

DELIUS AND THE LOST CHORD

Dear Sir,

I refer, not to a certain infamous song, words by Adelaide Anne Procter and music by Arthur Sullivan, but to the Cello Sonata by the composer in whom we are most interested. This is published by OUP and was recorded, in the early days of electric recording, by Beatrice Harrison and Harold Craxton, on four 78 sides. (In these LP days, we begin to wonder how we ever endured the process of dividing major works into four-minute lengths, but we did, and loved the records.) Now Frederick Delius, having brought the music to an obvious climax with a final chord (of G), then asks the pianist to repeat the chord, and the cellist to play the same note, an octave lower. One can see this in the printed edition; and although I am writing this about Delius, one cannot escape the sneaking suspicion that the conclusion has been weakened.

When Mr Craxton and Miss Harrison made that first recording of the work they left out the final bar, making the conclusion more effective. The early Argo recording by Anthony Pini and Wilfred Parry followed their example. The Roumanian recording by the cellist Radu Aldulescu and an unnamed but competent pianist, on the other hand, plays the conclusion exactly as printed. I have not heard the recent recording.

This Society may have the necessary contacts to establish my points. (a) What did Delius really intend for the last few bars of this Sonata? (b) If he wrote the two chords, by what authority did Harold Craxton, and any other pianists who may follow his example, omit it? (c) While seeing the point of the omission, I would not like to depart from the principle that the performer must play what the composer has written, not what he thinks the composer ought to have written. I write this sentence with due humility, and due regard and admiration for the artistic achievements of Mr Craxton.

How about trying to clear this matter up?

27 High Street, Rolvenden,
Cranbrook, Kent.

Rev. W. H. Oldaker.

The Editor asked Mr Robert Threlfall to comment, and he writes as follows:

I have it on the authority of Eric Fenby that Delius sanctioned the omission of the final chord of D in the cello part (the piano chord is tied and not repeated); this no doubt explains why it is performed this way on the early authentic recordings, whilst the foreign artists follow the printed copy.

A more important point concerns the first chord of this work. In the left hand, it should read C sharp (not C natural); and the same at the reprise of the opening on page 11. Members, mark your copies, please!

Incidentally, the Cello Sonata, first published by Winthrop Rogers and Universal Edition, is now issued by Boosey and Hawkes (not OUP).

On August 26th, our President was guest of honour on the BBC Radio 3 programme "Your Concert Choice", in connection with a broadcast of the Unicorn recording of the Third Violin Sonata, in which he accompanied Ralph Holmes

Dear Mr Redwood,

Although it is my intention, and pleasure, to send members individual letters of thanks, I would be grateful if you would allow me some space in your Newsletter in which to thank members generally for the gift presented to me by our President, Mr Fenby, at our Annual Dinner on May 19th.

In these days of economic freeze, the cheque for £180.00 is a most generous acknowledgement of the work I have been able to do for the Society over the years, and I am much obliged to Mr Parfitt for dealing with the 'presentation' correspondence, at a time when he was already busy with other accounting matters, at the end of the financial year.

When I became Hon. Secretary in 1963, I frankly had no idea of how to set about the duties of my office, and I am ever grateful to Mr Robert Aickman for his helpful advice. Looking back, I have had a wonderful time as Hon. Secretary, despite the hard work, and it would take the whole of the Newsletter to express my thanks to all those many members whom I have come to think of as blessings to the Society.

But I feel I must above all pay a tribute to my former colleague, and first Hon. Treasurer of the Society, Miss Ann Todd. Ann will remember with me, some of our early anxieties - and joys. Our first concert at Leighton House, and our relief at receiving our first donation from the Delius Trust. The arrangements for the late Mr Hugh Alderman's reception, in London, which after a lot of travelling and unravelling were given a fresh impetus by a timely postcard from Mr Fenby! The party for Mr Fenby's 60th birthday, the highlight of which should have been the music, but which in fact was the wonderful birthday cake Ann brought along, and the delicious sherry provided by Dr and Mrs Philip Emanuel!

And now - how am I going to spend the money presented to me? Well, as I announced at the Dinner, I am going to New York in September to see the two performances of Delius's opera "A Village Romeo and Juliet" at the New York City Center on September 23rd and 25th and, I hope, to meet some of our US members there. I am sure this Delian way of spending the money will meet with members' approval.

I remember that the first letter to reach me in 1963, congratulating me on becoming Hon. Secretary, was from our member, Mr Brian O'Brien, and I was most sorry to hear of his death earlier this year. I now pass on my congratulations, and best wishes, to Malcolm Walker on succeeding to the office of Hon. Secretary, to Stephen Duro on his election as Hon. Programme Secretary, and to you, Christopher, on becoming our new Newsletter Editor

I remain, of course, a devoted member of the Delius Society
 45 Redhill Drive, Edgware, Mx. Estelle Palmley.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

October 1973 : 22nd at 6.30 & 8.45 pm at the National Film Theatre, South Bank, London SE1 - Ken Russell's film "Song of Summer" — see page 12 for further details

23rd & 24th at Sadler's Wells Theatre, Rosebery Avenue, London EC1 — "The Walk to the Paradise Garden" (Royal Ballet New Group)

30th at 7.30 pm at Holborn Library, Theobalds Road, London WC1 — "Rare recordings of Delius" presented by Malcolm Walker

November 1973 :

14th at 8.30 pm at the National Film Theatre, South Bank, London SE1 — Ken Russell's film "Song of Summer" — see page 12 for further details

17th at 2.30 pm at the BBC Studios, Delaware Road, London W9 — Recording of "Lebenstanz" by the BBC SO/Del Mar

28th at 7.30 pm at the Holborn Library, Theobalds Road, London WC1 — Vernon Handley talks about "A Mass of Life"

December 1973 :

5th in New York — "Idyll" (Little Orchestra Society of New York)

January 1974 : 17th & 19th in St Louis — "A Mass of Life" —

21st in New York — "A Mass of Life"

25th in Washington — "A Mass of Life"

— see page 10 for further details

24th at 7.30 pm at the Holborn Library, Theobalds Road, London WC1 — Deryck Cooke talks about Delius

February 1974 : 1st at 8.00 in the City Hall, Newcastle upon Tyne — "Songs of Farewell" (Newcastle Festival Chorus, Brno Philharmonic Orchestra /Jiri Walhans). Tickets from the Ticket Centre, Saville Row, Newcastle upon Tyne. tel: 22888.

